Oh Gray Purity

Belle Grooves

A Gray Purity

By Belle Grooves

For, well, everyone.
Thanks!

For anyone who wants a book dedicated to them. You're welcome.

The boy's name was Lucas Glimpse. He didn't have any parents. Actually, he wasn't even entirely human. Not the same way you and I are human. (That is, of course, assuming that you *are* human...) He looked like a human. He saw things like humans do. Felt things, tasted things, heard things, smelled things. He even acted like a human, for the most part. His emotions were humane, except he didn't really know what to do with them. Not the way we do. He even wore clothes like us, only he didn't have to change them. He spoke like us, having learned from the fairies. So, yes, I suppose on the outside he was entirely human. But what he did and some of the things he sometimes thought were not things that ordinary humans might think about or do. They were strange things. Like whether it *should* rain or be cloudy. Or sometimes he wondered whether he should *make* it sunny without a single cloud. Lucas was, simply, a special boy. He was there to live peaceably on his little ledge with his swing-tree and his fairies. He was simply just there. And he had always, *always*, been there on his ledge, yet he was only eleven. And his fairies had always been there too.

His fairies were incredibly special. There were ten of them. One for each color. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink, brown, black, and white. They were there for company and because without their magic essence, Lucas's chalk wouldn't change colors when it needed to. Without the blue fairy, there wouldn't be any blue for the sky. They were indeed irreplaceable. They each had names, of course, so the boy didn't have to call them by their colors. The red fairy was primarily needed for the sunsets. He was called Ronan Mist. Isidor Mist was also for the sunsets because he was orange. Eileen Mist was yellow, clearly for the sun and stars. The green fairy was named Lysander Mist, they were all brothers and sisters; all called Mist. Lysander was for the trees that reached into the sky. Caspian, Lysander's twin brother, was blue. He was for the sky. Caspian was, arguably, the most important. Elara was purple, mostly for sunsets. Eulalia Mist was pink. Again, used on the sunsets. Esme was brown. Her color wasn't used nearly as often as the others. Sometimes Lucas caused the air to be dirty, but only out of kindness for Esme. She was also for the branches of trees that reached their arms into the beautiful sky. The black fairy was called Selwyn. He was needed when night arrived and for the moon. And the last fairy was white. She was there for the moon and the stars and when it snowed and for the clouds. Her name was Elsie Mist. Of course, the colors changed shades when they needed to. All the fairies were well acquainted

with Lucas Glimpse, and they all trusted him with their lives.

They were right to trust him. Lucas was the one who drew the sky with his chalk because he had a pure heart. He would never dream of ruining the sky or drawing something that never should be drawn. This boy was pure and honest and true, and that was why he alone could use the chalk and why he alone was able to draw the sky and why he alone was able to use the fairies' magic. And Lucas Glimpse himself was magical as well.

But we'll get to that later in the story. Here is a final word. This chalk I keep mentioning. Lucas's chalk. Well, Lucas has never seen another human being. He's never been around other people, only his fairies. And because of that, he doesn't know what a lot of things are called. What they're properly called, that is. His little piece of chalk is called Stardust. It wasn't actual stardust, no. He only called it that because he didn't know its proper name. Stardust had always been there, like the fairies had always been there, like Lucas had always been there. And Stardust would forever be there.

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Our story begins on Lucas's little ledge. It was nighttime on his ledge. He was standing on the edge of the cliff and drawing the night sky. Of course, over the years, he had learned how to use his own kind of magic. When he drew the yellow and white stars, he reached up and zoomed in with his fingers as you would on a screen. The little stars spread across the entire sky and brought with them a sparkling brilliance. When he drew the moon, he drew it much smaller than it truly was. That way, it would appear higher in the sky. A few times, however, he was required to zoom in on the moon for the finer details. When he drew the planets and the other space things, he used the same zooming technique. To make a shooting star, he drew a simple star. Then he would slide his finger across the sky, as though scrolling to the left or right. That would shoot the star away. Then he drew the dark green leaves, but only for the trees that reached to the sky. And when all of that was finished, Lucas rubbed a bit of Stardust, his chalk, between his fingers and blew it up toward the sky. Stardust's, well, dust gave the stars their twinkle. Gave the planets their glow. The moon its shine. Everything in the sky its everything. The dust was what ultimately finished the masterpiece that was the sky.

Then Lucas would place both palms flat against the sky, careful not to smudge it, and push the entire thing in a downward motion.

This set the moon on its course, and it would give the boy some time of his own. During these times, Lucas would sit on his swing or rest or be with his fairy friends. Tonight, when he finished, he smiled to himself and went into the small circle of trees.

This circle of trees was where Lucas's ten little fairies lived. Sometimes they left the comfort of the moss-covered ground and the Saucer Magnolias. The circle was littered with white and pink flowers and, somehow, appeared to have its own sort of shine. Like a softly scintillating rainbow that was just barely visible. The fairies themselves thought the trees huge and flowers large enough to clothe one half of their little bodies. In fact, the trees were only about twenty feet tall. The flowers were small enough to fit in the palm of Lucas's hand. The fairies themselves were small. Everything was, in their eyes, massive. The fairies were small enough and light enough to sit in the boy's hand without being too heavy. One at a time, of course. And all of these things, however small or insignificant, brought a pure gladness into all their hearts.

Lucas sat down and leaned against a tree, as often he did. The fairies didn't notice him immediately because most of them were fast asleep. But three of them found him and sat before him, patient smiles glowing upon their bright faces. Caspian was there, his pale blue shine throwing glimmering blue sparkles on the mossy ground. Those blue lights weren't alone though. There was black and white glitter as well. Selwyn and Elsie. The boys wore similar clothes, a light blue tunic and a black tunic. Elsie, like all the girls, wore a dress to match her hair and wing color. White. Bright enough that it seemed to produce its own brilliance. All the fairies produced a small light and a small glimmer. And all their delicate wings were unique yet equal in beauty. Elsie's wings were white and feathery, like a bird or an angel. Caspian's wings were light blue and seemed to reflect the blue of the sky. Selwyn's wings were dark and appeared to be thin enough to see right through them. Of course, his wings were strong enough to hold him up, so they couldn't really be that thin.

Now, as the three of them waited, Lucas smiled a gentle smile. He was never unkind to his fairies. Well, he was simply never unkind. "Yes, Selwyn, I did the shading properly. Of course, I made sure to use plenty of white on the moon, Elsie. And I made sure the sky was very dark blue and not black, Caspian."

Elsie ran her tiny fingers through her long, pearly hair that fell in waves. She blinked her long eyelashes innocently. Her childish features only made her seem all the more delightful. All the fairies

looked like young children. And all the fairies reached a great height of ten inches. No less and no more. And all the fairies were content.

Her voice was quiet and soft when she spoke. “We only must be sure. What if you accidently made the moon wrong?”

“Yes. Or made the sky black?” Caspian added, nodding vehemently.

Then came Selwyn. He was nice, as they all were, but his voice was deep and sounded odd coming from his boyish face. “And what if you hadn’t used any shading at all? What would I even be here for?”

Lucas laughed lightly. He had an easy sort of laugh, one that was pleasant and often used. “You all worry too much. I would never do something to mess up the sky. You know that. And anyway, Stardust wouldn’t let me do that. It has got a personality of its own, you know.”

“We know. How couldn’t we when it’s all you talk about?” Caspian rolled his icy blue eyes.

“You don’t believe me.”

“It’s a drawing stick, Lucas. How could it possibly have its own feelings?” Selwyn asked.

“It doesn’t have feelings, exactly. It just… doesn’t make mistakes. I don’t think it *can* make mistakes. It’s Stardust. Stardust is perfect.”

Elsie smiled. “I believe you.”

Lucas closed his eyes with a smile still upon his face. He fell asleep almost immediately. Sleep came easily to the boy. It simply always had. He’d never had a nightmare in his life. Never dreamed of anything except the serene sky. The clouds which drifted by. The sun in all its brilliance.

Though tonight his sleep did not last long, as it ought to have. Lucas opened his eyes to the stars that glittered in the sky much too early. All his fairies were, of course, still sound asleep. The sky was perfect as always it was. Stardust was wrapped in the boy’s artistic fingers. He hadn’t even had any memorable dreams. There was nothing at all indicating that he should be awake. Nothing. It was silent and calm and serene and beautiful. That’s how it always was. How it always had been. How it always would be.

Lucas sighed a small sigh as he slowly walked toward his swing-tree. He stared up at the sky as he walked, not really paying attention to where he was going. He could’ve easily walked off the cliff. Or perhaps crashed into a tree. But he didn’t. Even without looking, Lucas knew his ledge by heart. He knew where every stone

lay, where the circle of trees stood, and where the swing-tree sat as well. He knew all of these things without having to watch where he was going. And he found his way to that very tree. His swing-tree.

It was a simple magnolia tree, with branches that reached down toward the ground and up toward the sky. With leaves that sparkled and glittered in the sun's light. Little flowers that fell to the ground or had their petals whisked away by the wind. Of course, none of these things explained why it was called a swing-tree. It was called that because hanging from one of its outermost branches was a small, wooden swing. It hung from two thick vines. The seat of the swing was simply a plank of wood that had washed up from the ocean. You see, Lucas's little ledge led to the ocean if one went down the path to the bottom. The top of the ledge led to a cliff that hung above the shimmering and peaceful water. The ledge was really more like a slope. But it was called the ledge, nonetheless. And it was nowhere near a single human.

As Lucas sat on his swing, he rubbed Stardust between his fingers. He'd always done this with his chalk. It brought him comfort the same way a child might hold a blanket or sleep with a teddy bear. Stardust was Lucas's blanket and teddy bear. I know that sounds ridiculous and childish and absurd. But you must understand that Stardust and the clothes he wore were Lucas's only belongings. He had no bed, no blanket, no teddy bear, no book. He had his fairies, and he had his chalk. And that was all he needed.

For a long time, Lucas found a calmness and a peace in watching the comely moon move ever so slowly across the sky. He didn't take pride in drawing the sky. He didn't impress upon the fairies that he was the best and the only person who was able to do something so magical. He did not boast about his art. Lucas Glimpse drew the sky purely out of pleasure and a sense of duty. He was thankful to the fairies that offered their colorful magic for the sky. He was amazed every time that Stardust seemed never to allow the smallest of mistakes as it permitted him to make beauty and guided his hand across, well, across the sky. Lucas did not boast in anything. He only took pleasure in everything.

When Lucas turned his gaze from the sky, he looked down the slope. He couldn't see the bottom, of course, but he did see something he had become rather familiar with. After all, he had grown up with the fairies. He knew their shapes well enough to know that what he saw now was unmistakably a fairy. It wasn't one he'd ever seen before though. He would have recognized his own fairies if

they were a mile off. This fairy's shoulders were slumped, as though an invisible weight rested on them. His head was hung, as though he had lost any reason to enjoy the simple beauty of the world. His wings fluttered ploddingly, as though he had lost any reason to stay aloft. Whoever this fairy was, he was very unlike Lucas's own fairies.

Lucas's fairies were never sad, and they never hung their heads and they never cried. They were happy and smiling and free. They were content. And so was the boy. The fairy he watched disappear into the night was bland and sad and lost and pitiful and... gray. Yes, he was gray. Even from this distance, Lucas knew that the fairy's skin was gray, his wings were gray, his eyes were gray, his clothes were gray, his color was gray. He looked exactly like one of the boy's own fairies, only gray and depressed. Lucas felt his heart ache for the little fairy, felt a pang of sorrow. How could something so beautiful and wonderful and miraculous become so broken and lost and gray? Even a long time after the fairy was gone, Lucas continued to stare, something inside his heart secretly calling the fairy back to him. But, if the fairy heard him, it did not return. It continued to sulk away under an invisible cloud of sullenness.

"What are you looking at, Lucas? It's not like you to get distracted," a small, young voice said beside him.

Lucas hadn't even noticed the fairy sitting happily on his shoulder. He smiled and lifted Ronan onto a low branch. "I know. I really should pay attention. The sunrise ought to begin soon," Lucas replied.

Ronan narrowed his eyes and crossed his little arms. "You didn't answer both questions, young man."

"Young man? Really?"

"Lucas."

"All right. I saw something a little way down the ledge. Nearer to the water."

"What was it?" The red fairy was suddenly quite intrigued by this enigma.

"I think it was a fairy. A different fairy. He was sad and lost. And he was gray. Even his skin was gray. I feel sad for him, Ronan."

"Gray? There isn't a gray fairy, silly boy. You of all people ought to know these things."

Lucas turned away from the red fairy. "Yes. I suppose I ought to."

Ronan fluttered back onto the boy's shoulder. "But?"

"But I saw him. What if I see him again?"

"Impossible. He simply can't be real. Gray. Selwyn won't be happy about this."

"Whyever not?"

"He goes on and on about his precious shading. Gray is basically a lighter black."

Lucas laughed. "You're right, of course. A lighter black."

Ronan smiled and sauntered away. And I'm not talking about simply sauntering as in walking dramatically. I'm talking about sauntering away while dramatically fluttering one's wings and crossing one's arms. It was a feat only fairies were capable of achieving. And it made Lucas laugh each time one of his fairies sauntered.

He glanced a last time at the small slope where the fairy had been sulking. He turned away and rested his head against the tree which his swing hung from, watching the moon on its silent course. In only an hour, he would stand at the edge of his little ledge and draw the sun, draw the clouds and the sky-scraping trees. He would draw the red, orange, and yellow of the sunrise. He'd add the beautiful blue as well. To make the clouds fluff, he would draw them with a small hole, like a ruffly balloon. Then he'd blow in the hole, and they would fluff up, like blowing up a soft balloon. When he drew the colors of the sky, he rubbed his finger over the edges where the colors met to mix them. It was the same as smudging graphite on paper or smudging a scribble to make a shadow. He drew twenty leaves, all different in their own way, zooming in as he needed to. Then, using all his fingers, he would tap them hundreds of times to multiply them, and blow them to scatter them across the sky and onto their branches. Then he pushed upward, and the sun began to rise perfectly and flawlessly. After all of that, of course, Lucas would use Stardust's dust to add the final magic to the beautiful and exquisite sky. The leaves would blow in a slight breeze that brought a small chill. The sun would grow intensely bright and shiny. The clouds would grow bigger and fluffier. And the sky would become the marvelous wonder that it always had been.

After that hour passed and Lucas had done all of these things, he found himself staring at the place where the sad fairy had hovered. He felt his heart break for the pitiful creature. He felt... strange. As though he knew that he wanted to help, but at the same time he didn't want to help because he knew nothing of this fairy. What if he was evil? What if he was faking the sadness? What if he only wanted to do something horrible? Lucas could not bring himself

to do anything yet. But, perhaps when he knew more, he would be able to do more.

Lucas sighed, something he didn't often do, and leaned against a tree in the circle. His fairies were dancing about, giggling and talking to one another. They didn't notice the boy who seemed agitated and confused and worried. They didn't notice that he rubbed Stardust between his fingers in anxiety. His fairies didn't notice until he took a deep breath and asked them to join him. Of course, all of them did join him. They all loved Lucas. Two sat on his shoulders, four on his crossed legs, one on his head, one in his free hand, and the last two leaned against him on either side. They were like small children gathering around to hear a story, all trying to see the pictures at once.

Lucas's voice was quiet when he spoke. It still held the warmth and gladness and purity that it always held, but there was also a tinge of heartache as well. "I saw a gray fairy."

Eulalia leaned down from the boy's head, her pink hair covering his eyes. "Gray?"

"That's preposterous!" Selwyn gasped.

Lysander and Caspian looked at each other and laughed. "Gray is hardly a color. You can't have seen a gray fairy."

Elara fluttered her delicate purple wings. "Gray is ugly, Lucas. Why was he gray?"

"Yes, why?" Elsie and Eileen inquired.

Ronan, always taking charge as the first color of the rainbow, flew above them all and raised his hands for silence. "Let's wait to ask questions until Lucas has finished."

The fairies quieted down at once and whispered apologies to the boy who sat patiently. He was always patient with his fairies. They were sensitive creatures, you see, and had very fragile feelings. Lucas was never unkind to them, and he never wanted to hurt them.

"Yes, he was gray. I don't know why. I don't know why he was here. I only know that he was sad. He scarcely hovered above the ground an inch. His eyes were downcast. His shoulders were slumped. He wasn't happy and glad and joyful like you all are. He was sad and lost and broken." Lucas closed his eyes for a moment. "I want to help him. I don't want him to be gray and sad. There must be something we can do. Mustn't there?"

"Help him?" Ronan was incredulous.

"He's *gray*!" Selwyn exclaimed.

"Colorless!" Isidor was baffled.

"Lifeless!" Elsie was horrified.

"Hopeless!" Lysander was stunned.

Lucas very calmly removed Isidor from his palm. He set Eulalia on the ground with the others. He allowed the last fairies to leave his legs before standing up. All of them were gathered in a line behind him, suddenly quiet and respectful.

"Then let me ask this to each of you." Lucas faced them. "What if it was you? What if you were gray? Wouldn't you want help? A chance to be happy and colorful?"

The fairies shifted and shrugged. Their answers were clear. Of course, they would want to be colorful and happy. Of course they'd want help. Of course they would never want to be gray. If they were gray, then who would provide the color for the sky? Who would be there for Lucas? No one. The world would be dismal and gray and sad and lifeless. And each of the fairies knew these things.

"Then please, help me. Tell me how I can help him," Lucas said. He even managed a small and gentle smile which was returned by nearly all his fairies. All except one.

Selwyn stomped away, shaking his head and muttering to himself. Gray was only, after all, a lighter black.

Esme spoke first, none of the fairies noticing the absence of black. "You could color on him with Stardust."

"We could use magic to make him colorful," Caspian suggested.

"Or we could... Do something else..." Eulalia offered.

Lucas let his smile grow. "Why don't we talk about this later. I've got something to do."

Lucas heard the fairies whisper as he walked away. He felt the breeze against his face and through his wavy hair as he left the circle of trees. He felt the heat of the sun as it rose to the middle of the perfect sky. He walked to the edge where he often stood to draw the sky. Where he had *always* stood to draw the serene sky. He sat there now, dangling his legs over the edge. He was aware of the black fairy who sat beside him, still pouting, but he did not speak. He waited.

"Gray. I can be gray. What's gray even for? Why do you want to help him, Lucas? He's... gray," Selwyn muttered.

"Selwyn, he's a fairy just like you. His color has nothing to do with it. Being gray does not change who he is. I think this fairy is only sad. I think he needs help," Lucas gently replied.

"But you have us. You have all the colors. You have everything you need. What reason could you possibly have to help him?"

"You're right. I would never, *never*, dream of replacing a single one of you. All of you are amazing and wonderful and perfect. I love all my fairies, Selwyn. I wouldn't even consider allowing gray to take your place." Lucas looked down at his fairy with admiration and a slight seriousness. "But you must understand something. When I first saw that gray fairy sulking on the ledge, I felt sad for him. I don't know how to say it, exactly. My heart felt a sadness. I want to help him. I want to make him happy. I want him to feel glad. I want him to be like my own fairies. Like you. Happy. That's all. I'm not going to replace any of you. You're all my fairies. And that is perfect and wonderful and beautiful."

Selwyn jumped to his feet, a smile growing upon his small face. "Really? Truly? You promise?"

"Yes. I really truly promise."

The little black fairy skipped happily into the circle of trees, laughing about something to himself all the while. Lucas couldn't prevent the smile that shone on his own face as he watched his fairy. When Selwyn disappeared from sight, Lucas stood up and looked toward the sky, looked toward his artwork. He blew a few larger clouds away from the sun, hoping the light and shine would bring happiness to him. It made him feel better, if only to release a small amount of his confusion into the sky. He was tempted for a moment, only a moment, to draw dark clouds and rain. To draw lightning and create the thunder. But he resisted. Lucas did not typically bring rain upon the earth. He was a calm and peaceful boy, and his drawings reflected his simple gladness and purity.

Lucas sullenly shook his head and found his way to his swing-tree. He sat heavily on the swing and hung his head. He knew without looking that he would need to draw the night sky soon. The sun was setting in the darkening sky, the oranges and yellows and reds making pretty circles around the brilliant star. The boy on the swing thought about his fairies and the way they provided their colorful magic for the sky, for Stardust. The way they loved him. The way they had always been there and would forever be there. The way they were always simply glad. He loved his fairies, and he loved that they were infinitely willing to help him. And he wanted this gray fairy, whoever he was, to feel that same sense of being needed and being loved and being useful and being delighted all the time.

Yet he somehow knew that he likely would not be seeing that despairing gray fairy for a time. A time that would be perhaps long, or perhaps never. Perhaps it would be so long that Lucas forgot the

fairy did, in fact, exist at all. But that was ridiculous. Of course it wouldn't be so long a time. The fairy would surely return and perhaps then he'd be happy. Perhaps then the boy might really speak with him and rescue him from the sadness which seemed to seep from his every breath. Perhaps then he would be rescued from his grayness.

"Lucas! The sun is nearly set!" Caspian's urgent voice jarred Lucas from his thoughts. "What are you doing?"

Lucas stood up. "I was... doing nothing. I apologize."

"Well, stop doing nothing and draw the sky." The blue fairy's voice and tone were lighthearted, but Lucas felt a deep guilt. It must've shown on his face because Caspian smiled and sat on his shoulder. "It's okay, Lucas. I understand. Just... don't do it again. All right?"

Lucas nodded glumly and watched his fairy fly away. He took his place on the cliff and drew the night sky. The dark blue sprinkled with glistening white and yellow stars. The black, white, and gray moon. The planets. The galaxy. The entirety of space. Stardust might've been magical, and the fairies might've been magical. But Lucas's kind of magic was purer and nicer and more elegant and more graceful than any other kind of magic. His magic was beautiful and lovely and beaming. His magic was absolute and wholesome and sparkling with gladness. His magic was the perfection of love and purity put into a simple drawing.

The boy who was so magical and pure and glad sat in his swing-tree and smiled to himself. Drawing brought such a happiness and joy into his heart. It made him feel as though he had achieved something amazing. As though he had done something beautiful. And he had. He always had.

As his eyes drooped, Lucas thought about the gray fairy once more. His own fairies had suggested coloring on him with Stardust, but that wasn't quite the solution he was hoping for. They had offered to use their own colorful magic to restore him, but that wasn't it either. Lucas didn't know what *it* was. He only knew that he had to help this fairy. And perhaps the fairy had to help itself. Perhaps it had to *want* to be colorful and joyful before the color would stick. Before the gladness would stay in his heart for an eternity.

It happened perhaps a second before the boy's eyes closed in rest. He glimpsed a shadowy figure enter the circle of trees. His eyes closed before he saw it leave. He had been too exhausted to notice that it had been the gray fairy. Lucas had been too exhausted to

stand up and be with his fairies.

He didn't sleep long. He simply never slept long. If he was asleep for too long, then the sunrise would never happen. When Lucas did wake, however, he noticed the bright and magnificent moon was nearly ready to switch places with the sun. He rubbed his eyes and stood, but instantly noticed something odd. The perfect green moss that covered the ground of his ledge was no longer perfect. There was a strange spot that held a circle of gray. Only one. As though someone had splattered a single drop of gray paint on a green carpet. Lucas merely shook his head and continued to the edge of his little ledge.

Stardust was gently and precisely held in his fingers, of course, and Lucas raised it toward the sky. He drew the sun, the pretty colors that surrounded it in gradience. But when the time for blue arrived, there was only gray. Stardust did not shift colors and turn blue, as it ought to have. Instead, it faded and became gray and bland and lifeless. Lucas began to draw the leaves. They were the bright and dark and medium greens that they always were. The clouds shone white as always they had. The dust from his chalk brought everything together and gave it life as it always did. But he could not color the wonderful and beautiful blue of the sky. It simply no longer existed. And without blue, the sky was sad and dismal. Without blue, Lucas Glimpse could not draw his serene artwork.

Lucas nervously rubbed Stardust between his fingers and glanced at the circle of trees. Nothing seemed wrong. Yet everything felt terribly wrong. He slowly walked inside the circle and was happily greeted by all his fairies. Ronan smiled and admired the red of the sunset. Isidor laughed and fluttered around the boy. Eileen quietly sat on a branch and watched the sun. But that was where the ecstasy ceased. Lysander sat alone on a low and thin branch. His being on the branch was nothing to worry over, as he often sat there. The fact that he was alone was *everything* to worry over. Lysander had never been without his twin brother. He had never been without blue by his side. After all, blue and green were meant to be together. They were brothers. Twins. So why was green alone now? Where was his other half?

Lucas went to his side, the other fairies keeping a respectful distance. The boy offered his hand for Lysander to sit on, but the small fairy did not move. He did not raise his head. His wings looked as though they had wilted a little. Worst of these things, though, was when Lucas noticed that his green fairy was crying. He had

never in his life seen a single one of his fairies cry. He himself had never cried. With the simplicity and gladness of life, there never had been any reason to cry.

Lucas placed a gentle and light hand on his fairy's shoulder and spoke in a soft and caring voice. "Lysander, will you tell me what happened? Please?"

Lysander lifted his head and wiped his eyes. "I don't know what happened. I only know that he's gone. Caspian is gone, Lucas."

"I know. I'm so sorry. I should have slept in here. I could've done something. I-"

Now the little fairy placed his tiny hand upon the boy's shoulder. "It's not your fault."

"Then who's is it? Who did this? Who stole Caspian?"

"I didn't see anyone. I didn't hear anything. I don't think Caspian made any noise." Lysander reached behind him. "But when I woke up, I found this. Hidden beneath me."

Lucas lifted his hand to receive the object. He recognized it, of course. He knew his fairies from head to toe. He could tell which of them would come to him, which of them spoke without looking. He could close his eyes and describe their clothing in perfect detail. And even though the thing which lay in his hand was the wrong color, he knew, without any doubt, that it was Caspian's. He knew it belonged to his blue fairy. But now the small boot was gray rather than its natural navy. A dark gray, nearly black, but most certainly not the deep blue it had once been.

"The gray fairy, Lucas. He stole Caspian," Lysander breathed.

Lucas dropped the boot and laid his head in his hands. He felt tears of his own coming, but he pushed them away. "How? I spoke to Caspian just earlier... I don't understand. I-I wanted to help the gray fairy. I wanted him to be glad." The boy raised his head and took a deep breath. "I've got to find Caspian. I've got to find the gray fairy."

Selwyn and Ronan and Elsie and Eulalia and all the other fairies gathered around and on and beside the boy. He couldn't possibly believe he was going anywhere alone. He could not possibly believe for a second that he was going without them. Without his fairies. Could he?

"Lucas, we're coming too," Esme insisted.

"Yes, all of us," agreed Isidor.

"You can't leave us behind like that!" Elara cried.

Lucas smiled and laughed. "I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to wait for him to come back. He surely will, won't he?"

Ronan, Selwyn, and Lysander all nodded. “Oh, absolutely. He must. He simply must.”

“You see? I would never dream of abandoning you. You’re my fairies. You’re my everything.”

Elsie and Elara and Eulalia and Esme and Eileen giggled and kissed the boy on his cheeks. Ronan, Isidor, Lysander, and Selwyn only smiled proudly and laughed to themselves. It seemed obvious to the fairies that it was all thanks to them that Lucas had come to this decision. It seemed obvious to them that they, and they alone, were responsible for the boy’s reason to stay. It never occurred to them that Lucas had simply never thought of leaving. It never occurred to the boy’s fairies that he loved them for reasons other than their simple existence and ample magic. It never even occurred to them that he intended to go with the gray fairy when it next appeared. Or perhaps he simply intended to keep the gray fairy there on the little ledge. Perhaps.

Lucas left the circle of trees, and he left his fairies, still smiling gladly and happily. He didn’t go to this swing-tree though. He dangled his legs over the edge of the ledge and sat contentedly and silently for a peaceful moment. That peaceful moment was never interrupted, and it lasted for a long time indeed. Lucas sat on his ledge in gentle silence and contemplation for hours. How was he to draw the night sky if he couldn’t make it blue? Black was unacceptable. Caspian was very insistent upon the night sky being dark blue and never black. But if he wasn’t there, would it really hurt the fairy? Lucas sighed. Yes, of course it would. That was horrible of him even to consider.

The boy on the cliff had just come to a decision about the sky when a little orange fairy fluttered beside him. Isidor looked rather upset about something. He was crying. Lucas himself felt a little hollow inside. But surely it couldn’t have happened again. Could it?

“Lucas, it’s Selwyn. He isn’t anywhere! Like Caspian! He’s gone.” Isidor exclaimed, the little droplets sliding down his small cheeks.

Lucas stood up and placed the little creature on his shoulder. He went into the circle of trees. His fairies were there, as typically they were, but all of them were huddled together. All of their tiny shoulders shook. All of their eyes held tears that fell upon the mossy ground. All of them were afraid of who would be next. Where were Lucas’s blue and black fairies? Why had Orson taken them? What could he possibly hope to achieve?

Lucas removed the fairy from his shoulder and watched him

join the others. Seeing all his fairies together in a circle made the boy glad. He realized they truly were beautiful creatures, and he was privileged to be their Lucas. But seeing them together, and not seeing Caspian and Selwyn, brought him sadness. He felt a horrible sense of fear beating inside his heart. Knowing that all his fairies may never be together cracked and fractured and broke his heart. It hurt him in a way he did not understand. Lucas stumbled out of the circle, and he collapsed beside his swing-tree. He felt one single tear drip from his chin, and that was all. He was sad and hurt and worried, of course, but he didn't cry. He didn't know why he didn't cry. He didn't really understand the delicateness he felt in his heart the same way humans would. He didn't quite know what to do with his despair. So he simply sat. He hung his head. He pulled his knees close. And he stayed that way for a time.

Lucas didn't know what made him glance up. Perhaps the sudden darkness. Perhaps a sort of sixth sense, but not one to worry about. It was a feeling that something was terribly wrong with his serene and lovely sky. A feeling that if he did not look up, he would never again be able to bear seeing his wonderful sky. When he glanced up, his mournfulness deepened. His once perfect and flawless and elegant and comely and peaceful sky was hideous. It was ugly and repulsive and ungrateful and unlovely. It was gray. A solid and depressing and thick and disgusting gray. Lucas could scarcely stand to look at it. He could hardly believe his eyes. Perhaps he had lost the ability to see color. But he knew he hadn't. He knew the truth. And the worry and sadness and illness that it brought into his heart and soul nearly replaced his gladness and laughter and purity. Only nearly.

Lucas shook his head as he stood on the edge of his little ledge. He raised Stardust to the preposterous sky, and he drew. First the yellow sun, then the bright oranges and reds and pinks and purples and every color that perfected and brightened a sunset. And yes, I know. He should've been drawing the night sky with the moon and the stars. But he couldn't. There was no blue. There was no black. He drew what he had to draw. A sunset or a sunrise. He chose a sunset because that's how he felt. He felt as though his heart were sinking away from him. As though the world would soon be dark and tired. As though everything he knew and loved and believed was sinking far from his grasp. Despite all of this, however, when Lucas finished with the blow of dust, he couldn't help but admire his artwork. He had never drawn a sunset nor sunrise without adding the blue of the sky

at the edges. But now, as a small and fragile smile appeared on his face, Lucas felt okay. He felt calm. He felt, strangely, relieved. He did not push the sky down. He let it be as it was. The sun would not set today, and perhaps it never would again. He would not touch the sky until he knew everything was pure once more. These things did not matter to the boy who stood on his ledge at that moment though. What mattered to him most was the beauty and simplicity of his sky. It was there again. It was the most elegant and serene picture Lucas ever had drawn.

He left the edge and sat on his swing to wait for the inevitable gray fairy. He didn't, of course, expect his own fairies to be with this gray fairy. He only expected to see the gray fairy alone, and that's who he wanted to see. He wasn't ready to see what had been done to his blue fairy or his black fairy. He did not wish to know whether anything had happened to them. It would only cause his heart to break and then cease.

Lucas didn't know how long he had sat on that swing. He didn't know how long ago he had drawn the beautiful sunset. He didn't know how long it had been since he had realized Selwyn was gone. He might've been sitting there for hours. Perhaps a day. Of course, it hadn't been a day. It hadn't even been one hour. It had likely been a few minutes before the boy saw the gray fairy. Before he stood up from the swing and watched the sad and fragile fairy walk slowly and ploddingly up the slope of the ledge. Lucas felt sad for him once more, but not nearly so much as he had the first time. This time he felt a small anger inside him. This was the fairy who had stolen his own fairies. The fairy who had taken Caspian and Selwyn.

When the fairy was only inches from the boy, Lucas reached out and grabbed his arm. The gray fairy didn't try to stop him. Actually, the gray fairy collapsed into the boy's arms. Lucas frowned and felt his hands shake. This wasn't how it was meant to happen. This was all wrong. The fairy he wrapped in his embrace wasn't the gray fairy. It was a fairy who had once been blue. Lucas knelt on the ground and leaned Caspian against the swing-tree. His fairy was gray. All the color had faded from the blue fairy's wings and clothes and hair and eyes. His skin was not, thankfully, gray. But it was a very pale skin tone. He looked ill and hurt and delicate. He looked broken.

Lucas brushed away a tear and stood, scanning his little ledge for the monstrous gray fairy. He knew Caspian was meant to be a distraction. He knew the other fairy would already be there. But where? Lucas ran to the circle of trees. He saw the fairy standing

there in the middle. His own fairies had left, as they should've. Lucas didn't want them anywhere near this other fairy. He walked into the center of the trees. Close enough to touch the gray fairy. He sat on his knees so they would be closer in height. Then he studied this fairy. His skin was a pale gray. His little tunic was the color of concrete. His hair was wavy and light. His wings were, of course, gray. But they were also wilted and sad, as though they were too weak to carry him any longer. His eyes were gray, but they were not angry or hostile. They were confused and sad and afraid. And his small mouth seemed as though it had never smiled. He looked pitiful.

Lucas spoke softly. "Who are you?"

The gray fairy raised his head, something he did not seem accustomed to, and spoke in a quiet monotone voice. "Orson."

"Why did you take my fairies? What do you want?"

"I took them so they couldn't be colorful. So the sky couldn't be colorful. I wanted the sky to be gray. I wanted everything to be gray."

"Why?"

Orson shrugged. "Because I'm gray. I wanted everything to be like me. Then I wouldn't be the only gray thing."

"But the sky is beautiful and happy. How could you ever want it to be different?"

"You don't understand. No one does."

Lucas sighed. "Then help me to understand, Orson. I draw the sky because it's beautiful. Because that's what I love doing. Because it brings me happiness and gladness. My fairies are glad too. They're always happy. So why are you sad? What happened?"

Orson turned away. "It doesn't matter. Happiness doesn't matter. Give me your drawing device and I'll leave. I won't go near another one of your fairies."

"What will you do with Stardust?"

"I'll take it from you if you don't give it to me."

Lucas did no such thing. "You won't be able to use it."

Orson spun around to face the boy and now there did seem to be a slight anger in his eyes. He grabbed Lucas's hand with uncanny speed and ripped Stardust from his fingers. Orson twisted the boy's wrist in a strange direction. There was a crack. Lucas pulled his hand away and gritted his teeth. He wanted to scream and cry, and he wanted to run away, but he did none of those things. He watched the gray fairy raise the chalk toward the sky, but nothing happened. Orson's heart was nowhere close to pure and lovely. His heart was

confused and afraid and sad and lost and broken. Like him. Like his actions. Like everything he did and said.

Lucas stayed on his knees, looking down at his hand. If it had been his right hand, then perhaps he wouldn't have felt as much pain and sadness and fear. If it had been his right hand, it would not have bothered him nearly so much. But it wasn't. His left hand rested in his other hand, twisted in quite the wrong way. It was hurt. It was broken. But something else inside the boy broke as well. All his life he had been drawing the sky with that very hand. All his life he had held Stardust with that very hand. All his life he had depended on that very hand. Now it lay uselessly and painfully and delicately in his right hand. Lucas's spirit broke. His heart cracked. His soul fractured. He hadn't realized how much faith he put in that hand. How much trust. That hand was the one which drew beautiful things. The one which would never draw anything beautiful again.

This was not, however, what brought the tears. Lucas's tears did not come from pain or hurt or despair. They came later for a much different reason. For a pure reason.

Orson threw Stardust on the ground. "Why won't it work? Why does it work for you?"

Lucas looked up and took a deep breath. "You won't like the answer, but I'll tell you. It's because I use Stardust out of purity and pleasure and to make beautiful things. It's because I do not use Stardust for the darkening and saddening of the world. It's because my reasons are honest and true and yours are dishonest and disgusting."

The gray fairy made to crush the chalk, but Lucas could not allow that. He placed his hand over Stardust before the boot came crashing down. Lucas closed his eyes against the hurt, as he had naturally done this with his left hand. Orson wasted no time in pulling his foot away and stepping back. Something inside his eyes and his heart changed in that single moment. When he had seen the pain that he had caused the boy, something inside him healed. The change was not immediate, but he felt it and Lucas saw it. Lucas knew that Orson did not have to live in sadness. When the gray fairy had seen the boy's willingness to sacrifice himself, even for a simple drawing stick, his heart fixed itself.

Lucas grasped Stardust in his right hand as he leaned against a tree. He looked at the fairy before him and offered a kind and gentle and sincere smile. "Orson, please. Bring Selwyn here. Do something kind. Do it purely out of selflessness. Please."

Orson turned and stepped away from the circle of trees. “I will bring him here. But it will not be for you. It will be to show you that I am willing to make the world gray. That I will not change. That this is what I want.”

Lucas nodded. “Thank you.”

Orson left the boy. He didn’t glance back. He didn’t confess to everything he’d done and beg forgiveness. He simply walked away with a hung head and slumped shoulders and wilted wings. He walked away under a gray storm cloud of fear and worry and grayness.

And Lucas felt sad for him. Just as he had the first time. His heart wanted him to help the poor fairy. He felt it trying to call the fairy, to plead with him. Lucas didn’t want this fairy to leave his ledge in defeat and sullenness. He didn’t want Orson’s heart to break again and never be healed. He wanted the gray fairy to stay here and to be glad and enjoy the color of the world. He wanted Orson to be like his fairies. Glad and happy and calm and peaceful and colorful. He wanted Orson to be one of his own fairies.

“Lucas, are you okay?”

“Do you have Stardust?”

“Where are Selwyn and Caspian?”

“Lucas?”

There were only two voices. They belonged to the boy’s red and green fairies. To Ronan and Lysander. Both of them stood before him and both of them frowned. Both of them had tears in their eyes. Both of them were terrified and worried.

Lucas smiled a small smile. “I’m okay. I have Stardust. Caspian… He’s by the swing-tree. You must get the others and help him.”

“Is he okay?” Lysander asked.

“Where’s Selwyn?” Ronan added.

“Are you coming too?”

Lucas shook his head. “I can’t. Go to him. I’ll be all right. Please.”

“But you’ll come back, right? You’ll bring Selwyn?”

“I promise. Now go.”

Ronan grabbed Lysander’s arm and pulled him away. Lucas couldn’t prevent the quiet and content laugh that escaped his lips as he watched them go. But he couldn’t prevent the deep sorrow he felt as well, knowing that when his fairies saw Caspian, they would panic. They would feel despair and fear. He knew they would cry. It seemed, since knowing this gray fairy, that tears fell more often.

Lucas sat up when he saw Orson dragging another fairy behind him. Another gray fairy. Another hurt fairy. Orson pulled Selwyn to Lucas and let him go. Lucas, for perhaps the first time in his existence, willingly dropped Stardust to the ground. He lifted Selwyn into his lap and looked at him. His eyes were closed. His skin was pale. His little arms were limp. His hair had become a hideous gray. His tunic was an awful shade of the lifeless color. His wings looked almost translucent, and they too were the ugly and repulsive and dreary and tired gray. Selwyn was broken.

Lucas raised his head and tears glistened in his sunset eyes. "What have you done? I don't understand this, Orson. I-I'm so sorry."

The gray fairy looked at the boy he had hurt. "What?"

"I'm sorry. It pains me to see you this way. It pains me to see a creature so lovely and free and pure become so gray and sad and delicate and broken. Orson, I want to help you. I want you to stay here with me and with my fairies. I want you to be glad. I want you to feel pure and happy and colorful."

Lucas's tears spilled over his cheeks. His tears sparkled against Selwyn's chest. They glistened in the setting sun's light like diamonds, like artwork. The tears were much like one of his drawings, lovely and beautiful and pleasant and serene. But if this was a picture, it was the saddest picture he had ever drawn. Lucas's tired and sad eyes met Orson's. If this was one of his pictures, it was the most heartful and soulful picture he had ever drawn. The tears were not sad, they were kind and understanding and forgiving and merciful and comely. They made a sparkling puddle in his lap. And if indeed this was one of his pictures, it was the purest picture he had ever drawn in all his existence.

"You don't want me to stay with you. I've done horrible things. I've hurt people. I hurt you. I'm lost. I'm gray. I'm hopeless. But I will leave you. I will not return," Orson replied.

Lucas carefully placed Selwyn on the mossy ground and stood before the gray fairy, the serene tears still on his face. "Yes, I do want you here. I forgive you for hurting me and my fairies. If you're lost, you may stay here with me and my fairies. If you're gray, I will make you colorful. If you're hopeless, I will give you hope." Lucas placed both of his hands on the fairy's shoulders, wincing once. "If you apologize, if you trust me, if you stay, then I promise I will heal you and I will forgive you and I will be glad with you. I want you to be here, Orson, I do."

Orson's own eyes spilled their own tears. They spilled sad and

happy and healed and glad tears. His heart fixed itself and his spirit was restored. In that moment, he was glad, but he was also different. He was regretful and tired and so very sorry. He saw the world, and all the beauty and color it held, and he was happy. He was tired of grayness and lifelessness. He was ready to go home.

Orson spoke softly and gently and kindly and apologetically. "I'm so sorry I hurt you. I'm sorry I hurt Caspian and Selwyn. I'm sorry for everything. Will you... will you forgive me for these things?"

Lucas embraced Orson as he would one of his own fairies, though it caused him pain. "I will always forgive my fairies, Orson Mist. Always."

Orson pulled away and placed both of his hands over Lucas's still left hand. "Thank you, Lucas." His little hands fixed the boy's hand. Lucas winced when his bones clicked into their proper places, but he did not complain, and he did not pull away. He smiled. He smiled because he saw the gray fairy and he no longer was sad and gray. His skin was bright and glad. His wings fluttered happily. His light gray eyes sparkled with tears, but with something else as well. They sparkled with hope and joy and beauty. He was a gray purity.

Orson touched Selwyn's forehead, and the color was restored. His eyes did not open, but he no longer was gray. He was black and he was beautiful and he was perfect. Lucas lifted his fairy into his arms, and he offered his hand to Orson.

Orson shook his head. "I can't. I deserve no such kindness."

Lucas laughed his lovely and pure and easy laugh. "You deserve just the same kindness that all my fairies deserve. Please."

Orson picked up Stardust and placed it in the boy's hand. "Lucas..."

"Yes?"

Orson sat in the boy's hand. "Thank you."

Lucas walked away from the circle of trees and stopped at his swing-tree. All his other fairies were there, waiting for him. Caspian was slumped against the tree, still gray. Lucas laid Selwyn down and knelt beside his blue fairy with Orson. The gray fairy touched Caspian's forehead. The blue returned to his hair and his wings and his tunic. His skin turned bright. His wings blossomed. But he did not wake. And Selwyn did not wake.

Lucas's fairies grew impatient and nervous. They hated Orson. They didn't want him to be there. Orson grew fearful. Lucas rubbed Stardust between his fingers. He waited for them to open their eyes. To sit up and smile tiredly. To hug him. But they did not.

Lucas looked at Orson. “What’s wrong?”

“I-I don’t know. I... I’m sorry.”

Orson dropped to his knees and placed his head in his hands. His shoulders shook with sobs. His wings began to wilt once more. His skin began to fade. But then something happened. Caspian and Selwyn did open their eyes. They did sit up and smile tiredly at Lucas. They embraced him and he felt as though his heart could relax at last and find peace. He felt okay again. He felt peaceful and calm and serene. Lucas knew now that everything would be perfect. And when he saw his blue fairy hug his gray fairy, saw all his fairies hug Orson, he knew that everything would be lovely and glad and happy. He knew it would be how it was supposed to be. He sat on his swing with peacefully closed eyes, with his perfect Stardust, with a relaxed and glad and beautiful and infinitely pure heart. Lucas Glimpse was pure, and Stardust was pure, and his fairies were pure, and he knew that everything would be purely okay. The End

A boy and his ten fairies and Stardust

Lucas Glimpse is a special boy. He can draw the sky with a piece of chalk called Stardust. His fairies use their colorful magic to change the color of his chalk. On his little ledge, everything is perfect. Everything is pure.

Until a gray fairy decides to come. This gray fairy steals some of Lucas's fairies. This gray fairy is sad and lost and broken. But, despite these things, Lucas wants to help this fairy. He wants the gray fairy to be glad and content and pure. But is that what the gray fairy wants? Does the gray fairy want to be colorful? Or does he only want the world and the sky to be gray?